The Prism of Truth

For those who seek the colours beyond the light.

Truth is no fixed light; it is
A glow that with the angle shifts.
Only by light that fractures through
The prism of experience's facets
Truth's colours do unfold their
Many faces — and bring art to life.

Yvonne M. Raden

The Science, the Truth, and the Art of Riding

On what science can n o t be for the art of riding

When discussing science, the findings of scientific research and their application or applicability in the art of riding, reflecting on the very notion and concept of truth itself is certainly worthwhile. The question of what truth actually is ranks among the oldest inquiries in the history of human thought: ever since human beings have seriously reflected, that is to say, have philosophized, they have been racking their brains over it — quite literally, in fact. For it is not only an ancient question, it is also one of the most difficult and challenging questions at all, and whether there exists — nota bene! — a *true* answer to it, we do not know,

perhaps cannot know, and may therefore never come to know. Nevertheless, it is well worth reflecting a little on truth(s), viewpoints, perspectives, interpretations, and how we approach and navigate them. In doing so, truth — or what may be considered as truths in various scientific disciplines — first becomes truly intelligible. Moreover, it becomes possible to discern what science *can* contribute to the art of riding, and, most crucially, what it *cannot.*

Part 1: What Is Truth?

What, then, is truth? I have already alluded to the complexity of this question: philosophically speaking, it is far from easy to answer. Let us begin with a brief classical definition:

Truth is the correspondence between thought and the object of thought.

In the original Latin: *Veritas est adaequatio intellectus et rei.* Thus Thomas Aquinas states in his *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* ("Disputed Questions on Truth"). This view is commonly referred to as the "correspondence theory." (The difficulty here lies in the question of to what extent such a correspondence between thought and object is even possible — though we need not venture quite that deep here.)

Truth is therefore, by its very nature, objective — it contains nothing subjective. This implies that the idea of a personal or individual truth does not exist. Such a notion would more accurately be described as an "opinion". We might even refer to it as a "viewpoint." A word of caution: opinion (or viewpoint) and truth are fundamentally distinct; they may coincide at times, but they need not have anything in common. This distinction — trivial as it may seem — is crucial, for what is often taken to be (scientific) truth is, more often than one might think, merely an opinion. Such an opinion is much easier to grasp and, precisely because it is one's *own*, feels so coherent and convincing that one is all too readily inclined to mistake this opinion for truth.

Of course, it is desirable that any view be grounded in truth. But one must be willing to thoroughly investigate it. What matters above all is to reflect carefully on what one is actually dealing with: truth, or merely a point of view. To put it another way: might we simply be seeing a true — yet merely partial — aspect of a more complex reality? (A shift in perspective is, after all, never a bad idea when one is seeking to approach truth.)

Example 1: Consider a cylinder — the geometric solid — and hold it in such a way that you are looking only at its base or top: What you see is a circle. Now, if you rotate the cylinder so that you face its full lateral side, it can be taken to resemble a rectangle. Mathematicians would more precisely refer to this as a cross-section or longitudinal section. These are two-dimensional shapes (a circle, a rectangle), whereas the cylinder itself, as a solid, is of course three-dimensional. If one considers only these sections (i.e., only the base or only

the lateral side) and thus merely one aspect at a time, one completely neglects its spatial extension. (This may sometimes be appropriate.)

In the first case, then, one sees a circle. And if someone says, "That looks like a circle," this is clearly a true statement. However, if someone goes on to say, "The object is a circle," the statement is false — since the object is, in fact, a cylinder, a three-dimensional solid.

But how is someone to assess the truth of such a statement if they do not know, or cannot tell, that the object is three-dimensional — perhaps because this is not apparent under certain lighting conditions?

Moreover: if one person sees *only* the base of the cylinder and says that it looks like a circle, and another sees *only* the side and says it resembles a rectangle, both statements are true, as different as they may be. Yet they each refer to different aspects[1] of *one and the same* object. However, if the first claims, "It *is* a circle," and the second, "It *is* a rectangle," then neither statement is true. The truth remains: it is neither a circle nor a rectangle, but a cylinder.

Ideally, we are aware that any *particular* view we hold is focusing on one *aspect* while disregarding others — though we may at best be aware of their existence. If not, we should be fully aware that we may lack full insight — perhaps without even knowing it, and that a different perspective on the same object or problem might reveal an entirely different picture.

So we should be cautious: do we always know how many dimensions something has? And how much truth — or understanding of the whole — does knowledge of individual aspects actually provide? Hence:

What is often referred to as truth is, more often than one might think, nothing more than a particular point of view.

A point of view that *may* well express a true statement about something. Yet someone viewing the same thing from a different perspective may hold a view that is equally true! Therefore:

Engaging with precisely the differing perspective is, rather likely, what brings us closer to the truth itself.

This idea approaches what philosophers call the "consensus theory" of truth, according to which:

Truth is what can be agreed upon in an open, free discourse.

[1] aspect: view, from Latin aspicere = ad-spicere "to look at" or "to observe".

The openness of the discourse is therefore crucial. How open are many discussions to other perspectives or arguments — or is discourse even permitted at all when it comes to some views sold as „truth“?
Again, a word of caution, since:

Even many can be gravely mistaken!

Then there is the “coherence theory” of truth. And now it starts to get quite challenging:

A statement is true when it is compatible with a consistent and coherent system of beliefs or propositions.

In essence, this concerns logic, consistency, and freedom from contradiction within a system. However, a problem arises once again: fundamentally, there can be several different, yet internally consistent systems. What, then, is truth or the value of a truth? Things become quite complicated here, and we will leave it at that for now.
(By the way, this concept of truth is a fundamental basis in and for mathematics. Those interested are encouraged to read about Kurt Gödel and axiomatic systems.)

On Error, Chance, Causality, and Coincidence

Since we’ve already touched on error above: we should also keep in mind that it may well be we ourselves who are mistaken — and not the many others. Perhaps we view something from a particular perspective, forming an opinion that, nonetheless, is a false statement about the thing itself. This is especially likely to occur when we take something that happened *by chance* to be the *cause* of a result. Here is an example — admittedly absurd, but all the clearer

Example 2: Let us suppose that my stablemate’s horse begins shaking its head violently and frequently one day. By coincidence, I recently came across something online: that if, at the very moment the horse shakes its head, you stomp three times with your right foot, tap your head six times with your left hand, and at the same time whistle the opening notes of „Hänschen klein“ (a traditional German children's song), the headshaking will disappear once and for all after three days. Eager to help, I decide to give it a try the next time — not without having practiced beforehand. Stomp, tap, whistle. After all, it probably won’t do any harm. And behold: three days later, the horse stops shaking its head. One might well think: so the stomping–tapping–whistling treatment actually cures headshaking? What doesn’t occur to me, however, is that — purely by coincidence — on the third day after the „Hänschen klein“ intervention, the temperature had dropped significantly: it had turned cold, windy, rainy, and

almost wintry. And so, there were no longer any of those annoyingly persistent flies around that had been terribly tickling the horse's ears — the true cause of the headshaking. But I fail to recognize that — so thoroughly fixated am I on my „Hänschen klein" perspective.

A misinterpretation due to bias is, incidentally, known as confirmation bias. And to be clear: there is something true about the „Hänschen klein" episode — namely, that there was a *temporal* connection between the application of the method and the end of the headshaking.

Whether such a connection is actually *causal*, however — as is all too readily assumed when a setting appears less obviously absurd — is something that ought to be questioned more often.

The phenomenon is known as *accidental coincidence*: a mere co-occurrence of events without any causal relationship.

This absurd example may seem obviously ridiculous and provoke little more than a shake of the head. But upon careful and honest reflection, can we not recall something we ourselves went through — where we became „Hänschen klein" advocates? Where we confused causality with accidental coincidence?

But be that as it may, this example brings us to yet another concept of truth, namely what is referred to as "pragmatic truth":

According to this, what proves effective in "real life" practice is regarded as true.

This conception of truth certainly calls for especially critical scrutiny. What does it mean to prove effective? Effective for what, or in which context? And who holds the authority to make that judgment?

After all, the training method known as „Rollkur" — often referred to as the "deep, low and round" or "low and round" method — has, regrettably, also "proven effective" in certain circles…

Conclusion of Part 1

As we have seen, it is not even easy to say what truth really is, in and of itself. It is equally challenging to determine with certainty whether a given particular thing or fact is truly true or not. And one should not forget that truth can indeed have many facets. We must also remember that there is a difference between truth and opinion. It is not uncommon that one's own perspective illuminates only one aspect of a much larger whole and thus at most uncovers a *partial* truth, which can by no means be called the *sole* or *complete* truth.

So, what *is* truth, then? I particularly appreciate what Terry Pratchett once said on the matter (and I'll resist the temptation to render it more poetically than he did, by re-translating the remarkably elegant German version):

„The truth isn't easily pinned to a page. In the bathtub of history the truth is harder to hold than the soap and much more difficult to find."

Part 2: Science and Truth

We now turn to scientific truths — or rather: to the question of how truth is found in science. But what, in fact, is *science*? Even that is not so easily answered. There is no such thing as *t h e* science. There are many sciences, each with its own methods and its own conception of truth. The natural sciences differ fundamentally from the humanities; even one natural science is not quite like another — biology, for instance, is fundamentally different from physics. Philosophy proceeds differently from linguistics. And mathematics is a category all its own: while often grouped with the natural sciences, it is *n o t* one of them. It is far closer to philosophy — and yet it has its own subject matter, its own methods. And its own conception of truth. (See above: coherence theory.)

Let us begin with mathematics. Here, things are relatively "simple": everything is derived within a fixed system based on a very small set of fundamental assumptions — assumptions universally accepted as true — and reduced to a few clearly defined basic concepts, the so-called axioms. For example: the point and the line in geometry. In mathematical logic and in dealing with mathematical objects, there is only true or false — and nothing in between. This is the axiom of *tertium non datur* ("no third is given").

Example 3: It is, quite obviously, reasonable to say that a geometric figure is *either* a circle *or* not a circle. A figure cannot be "somewhat a circle", nor can it be *both* a circle and *not* a circle at the same time. On this point, there is universal consensus — see again Part 1.

Within this logical system, truth is whatever can be recognized as true there. In individual cases, this is anything but simple: despite having only a few basic building blocks, the system is incredibly complex due to the rules that allow these blocks to be combined arbitrarily in countless ways. Yet without exception, anyone and everyone capable of operating within this system will arrive at the identical result "true" — if, and only if, it *i s* logically true.

A mathematical truth was true before it was recognized as true,
and it is and always remains true — independent of time, place, and person.

Provided it is truly a truth and not merely a (false) claim whose "proof" contains logical errors. Such a "proof" is not a genuine proof, but worthless nonsense. Well, perhaps not entirely worthless, since the method and line of reasoning can still hold value. But that is a separate matter. Worthless here in the sense of: *Ex falso quod libet* — "from falsehood, anything follows." Including falsehoods. Sheer arbitrariness. And so, even in mathematics, one can quite masterfully (if unintentionally!) fool oneself… The beauty of mathematics lies in the absolutely *objective* verifiability: if such an error is made publicly, it will, sooner or later, come to light, beyond any doubt. (If it remains private, it may still be detected, but need not be. It depends on whether one ever looks at it again. And so on.) But that, for now, may suffice on the subject of mathematical truth.

Things look rather different in the natural sciences proper, with their entirely distinct methods of observation and experimentation, followed by analysis and — not to be overlooked — varying degrees of interpretation. These sciences concern themselves (to varying extents) with what they find in nature. The classic examples are biology, chemistry, and physics — the latter being the natural science closest to mathematics, though still with its own peculiarities, especially when it comes to the extremes: the infinitely large (the universe) and the infinitely small (quantum physics). The models developed in these fields are approximations — as are the mathematical formulas and equations they employ, since rough rounding or a rather liberal handling of operators is not uncommon in the name of plausibility or practicality. Such practices can make a theoretical mathematician break into a cold sweat or flinch involuntarily. But here, truth is measured by how well a theoretical model serves to describe and explain phenomena in the world. History offers plenty of evidence that quite a few such "scientific truths" have long since faded into oblivion.

Truth in this context holds only until it is disproven.

This, precisely, is a crucial characteristic of science: falsifiability. It is, in a way, the core of scientific knowledge and fundamentally what distinguishes scientific theories from other claims:

A scientific theory must be formulated so that, in principle,
it can be disproven by observation or experiment.

Those who wish to explore this topic in more depth might consult the philosopher of science Karl Popper. Let us now consider two examples: one that is falsifiable and another that is not.

Example 4: One might claim, "All swans are white." This statement is *falsifiable*: the discovery of a single black swan would disprove the theory. Discovering countless white swans

may support the claim temporarily, but it does not prove it — after all, there might still be a black swan somewhere that simply hasn't been found yet.

Example 5: „Human beings possess free will." — Why is this claim *not falsifiable*? It lacks *empirical testability*, since there is no observation or experiment that could be conducted to refute this statement. Regardless of which decision a person makes — whether it appears rational, emotional, random, or seemingly determined — it can always be interpreted as an expression of free will. It cannot be proven that a decision was *not* made out of free will. *Every observation* fits this narrative: for example, if someone makes an apparently irrational or random choice, one could argue that this is an expression of their free will — not to be guided by external constraints. If someone makes a logically reasoned decision, that as well could be interpreted as free will making use of reason. Even if physiological processes in the brain are identified that precede a decision, it could be argued that these processes are merely side effects or tools of free will — not its cause or determining factor.
In short, there are no predictions that could be falsified. A (natural) scientific hypothesis makes predictions about the world. If those predictions fail, the hypothesis is falsified. However, the claim of free will does not yield any concrete predictions about human behavior that could be proven false. It is a statement about a human trait that defies any attempt at empirical falsification.

Whether free will exists or not is, without doubt, a deeply philosophical question. But, in terms of falsifiability as defined by Popper, the claim of its existence is not scientifically testable in the sense of the natural sciences, because there is no way to empirically disprove it, as we have seen in the example. (It is evident here that philosophy, as a discipline, has its own distinct rules and goals. I have deliberately excluded these, as well as those of other disciplines, since their relation to the topic of this discussion is rather marginal.)

Let us note, then: A theory that cannot be disproved is not (naturally) scientific. If a claim is so vague or all-encompassing that *every* possible observation could be consistent with it, then it makes no precise predictions and cannot be tested against reality. But only what is falsifi*able* can enter *scientific discourse* at all and lead to new insights by replacing old theories with better, more comprehensive ones. This, incidentally, is the principle of trial and error: hypotheses are formulated and then systematically tested to be disproved. The more tests a theory withstands, the more robust it appears — yet it always remains provisional.

Let us consider another branch of science, namely (veterinary) medicine. Here, the concept of the "study" is a fundamental part of gaining knowledge. In studies, data are systematically collected and analyzed to test hypotheses about specific phenomena. A "truth" derived from a study is therefore a *statistical truth*, revealing *probabilities* and *correlations*. This means that a result is not absolute or certain, but occurs or is observed with a given probability. Because of the

diversity of individual reactions and the complexity of biological systems, *universally* and *absolutely* valid statements and "truths" are, in fact, almost impossible. A study can then, as a substitute, provide us *tendential truths* based on statistics. As noted in Part 1, it is crucial to remember that a study usually illuminates only partial aspects of a complex whole. It isolates variables and attempts to identify relationships between them. The "truths" derived are therefore context-dependent and cannot be unconditionally applied to other situations. In this sense, they are not universally valid. They are *partial truths*, conditioned by the chosen perspective (study design, analysis, etc.).

At this point, let us briefly review some of the most common errors in study design and analysis:

- Selection bias — occurs when the choice of study participants or subjects is not representative of the population to which the results are intended to apply. This can lead to distorted outcomes because certain groups are over- or underrepresented.
- Confirmation bias — as mentioned above (the „Hänschen klein" example), this happens when information is interpreted or sought in a way that confirms preexisting hypotheses or beliefs, while contradictory evidence is ignored. In short, prejudice.
- Confounding variables — arise when some unnoticed or uncontrolled third factor influences the observed variables in such a way that an apparent correlation arises, which in reality is not causal. (Let's think again of „Hänschen klein" here!)
- Publication bias — studies with significant or positive results are more likely to be published by scientific journals than studies with non-significant or negative results. This leads to a distorted representation of the evidence in the scientific literature.
- Cherry picking / data mining — refers to selectively choosing only those data or analyses that support the hypothesis, or conducting so many analyses until a statistically significant result is found — even if this is by chance.

Recognizing and taking these distorting influences into account — whether when reviewing study results or, as is all too often overlooked, when interpreting situations or conditions in one's own practical work using study findings — is absolutely essential! After all, the goal is to gain *genuine* insight from them and truly approach the truth.

Example 6: Consider, for example, the topic of "pain signals". What immediately comes to my mind is the excellent book by Navid Kermani, „Ungläubiges Staunen über das Christentum" (also available in English as: „Wonder Beyond Belief: On Christianity"; Polity Press, 2017), in which he observes that facial expressions are essentially identical on the one hand in moments of the utmost rapture and on the other in the greatest pain — see the chapter "Francis" on page 154:

> „Aus welchem Grund auch immer hat Gott gewollt, daß wir gerade dann am häßlichsten aussehen, wo wir vom Schönsten erfüllt sind, nicht nur die Gesichtszüge verzerrt und wie gequält, der ganze Leib verkrampft wie in einem Anfall."

> „For whatever reason, God has willed that we look our ugliest precisely when we are filled with the most beautiful — not only our facial features distorted and as if in pain, but the whole body cramped as in a seizure." (Remark: This is my own translation of the German quotation, as I do not have access to the authorized English version of the book.)

What does reflecting on this observation teach us about the interpretation of (not only) facial expressions? First and foremost, always consider the context! Beyond that, confirmation bias and confounding factors can distort interpretations in everyday practice quickly and without notice. It is no coincidence that many people, once they have begun to engage with the topic of "pain signals" — I myself prefer the term "stress signals," not without reason — report that they now see such expressions everywhere and perceive pain in everyone, almost constantly. This certainly overshoots the mark, however well-intentioned the impulse might be. Misinterpretation of this kind leads to uncertainty and inhibition — a result, if you will, of over-simplification combined with the undue exaggeration of a single finding.

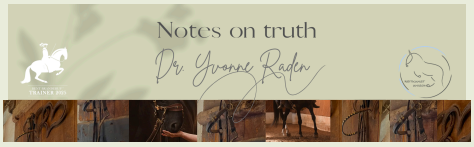
In conclusion: *Differentiation, critique, awareness of distortion,* and *contextualization* — these are the key concepts one must always keep in mind; the filters through which everything ought to be viewed.

One final thought on studies, statistics, and the significance of results in individual cases. This relates to the issue of probabilities versus singular events: We all know that winning the lottery is extremely unlikely. In fact, you are significantly more likely to be struck by lightning than to win the lottery. The odds of winning the jackpot in the classic German lottery (6 out of 49 with a super number) are approximately 1 in 140 million. By contrast, the probability of being killed by a lightning strike in Germany (per year) is about 1 in 12 million (or 1 in 20 million, depending on the source and the year in question, as the number of fatalities varies — but generally ranges between 3 and 7 annually).

That means that the probability of being struck by lightning is about 7 to 11 times higher than the chance of hitting the lottery jackpot! Now, 1 in 12 million — which translates to roughly 0.0000083% — is still incredibly unlikely. Yet both do happen. And I would say both the lottery winner and the person struck by lightning probably could not care less how unlikely it was… So much for statistical statements versus single events.

What does this mean for a scientific discipline that is predominantly based on statistical truths? (Recall Part 1, about pragmatic truth and the error of the many!)

In single events, a considerable margin for error remains — science or not.



Part 3: And the Question of Truth in the Art of Riding?

The term *Academic Art of Riding* immediately evokes, for most people, an association with "university" – and the notion of science is not far behind. Indeed, there was a long period in history when universities included riding academies. Riding was then taught in connection with philosophy, ethics, and physical discipline. At that time, its close link to science lay in an educational ideal that understood theory and practice as a unified whole. That idea, in essence, lives on in Academic Art of Riding today – as a practice in which, ideally, profounding knowledge is made visible through action: with ethical intent, aesthetic discernment, and didactic reflection.

Science itself – and the very concept of science – has undergone a profound transformation over time, both in meaning and in method. And rightly so, for this development is a necessary consequence of growing knowledge. In this sense, it is not entirely accurate, as one sometimes hears, to describe Academic Art of Riding as science-*based*. That would imply it were *grounded* in science. But as an art, it is *not* — even if it occasionally draws upon scientific insights.

There are also moments — after a new "truth" has emerged from a study — when one might feel: "Honestly, I'm starting to lose track of what to do to avoid getting it wrong. Can't science simply tell us how to properly train horses in the art of riding?" But that is something you will never find in science relevant to the art of riding. Art of riding is an art, not a science. More importantly, it is inherent to the descriptive sciences — that is, those that describe rather than prescribe — that they cannot, and indeed do not aim to, tell *h o w* to do something, but only *h o w n o t* to do it. (Think of falsifiability.) Nor is it their task, as they are essentially descriptive rather than prescriptive or normative.

The role of science in the art is, after all, to warn against mistakes.

No science may, should, can, or even wants to dictate how art must be done. Its task is to analyze, break down, and to understand individual phenomena. The art of riding, by contrast, is based on experience, feeling, intuition, and the complex, ever-changing interplay between the individuals — human and horse — in each moment. It seeks the *how*.

Scientific descriptions often capture valuable parts of a complex whole and make true statements about a specific aspect. Yet these "truths" always remain *partial*, they can never fully grasp the art of riding. Scientific methodology is designed to reduce, isolate, and quantify — gaining knowledge of complex phenomena by breaking them down into measurable parts. In short, it can and will *never* provide us with the complete answer to how best to train a horse.

Science, of course, is also explanatory. It describes *why* something happens. However, it does not provide direct instructions on how to proceed in artistic practice. And it simply cannot.

On the art of riding, Pluvinel wisely writes:

„[…] how impossible it is to explain or describe all the details involved in training a horse. […] It is only the rider's practiced mastery in the use of hand and leg, combined with a very keen sensitivity to the horse and long experience in the art of riding, that allows him, at the right moment, to draw upon a thousand and yet another thousand other things that cannot be explained or written down, but arise solely from the immediate situation and necessity itself."

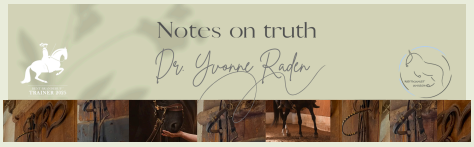
And also:

„My method of proceeding is entirely determined by the immediate circumstances and opportunities, so that it would be very difficult for me to put it into writing, since any approach rooted in understanding and judgment can scarcely be conveyed in words. In essence, my method consists in proceeding with sensitivity and discernment, in waging a battle with the eye, adapting one's actions moment by moment as required, and working more with the horse's mind than with its legs.

No amount of books could ever fully capture all that constitutes the art of riding — an art that emerges anew in every single moment — and not only with each individual horse.

Science, then, does not draw the conclusions for action. It is the experienced rider and trainer who must apply insights to the individual horse and situation. Therefore, science cannot provide us with a "true method." The "truth" in the art of riding is often a pragmatic truth that proves itself in practice — and yet, here again, I must caution, think back to „Hänschen Klein". Does something prove effective because it truly works, or simply because it coincides with other, unrecognized positive influences? And, of course, the end does not justify the means! (Examining the "sanctity" of the means — that is, ensuring the exclusion of cruelty in a broad sense — is, on the other hand, a task for scientific methods! Here, another battle with the eye — and the mind — is worthwhile…)

Now, the final conclusion from all this is: The art of riding is a living dialogue between rider and horse, shaped by a subtle sensitivity to nuances, timing, and communication. Scientific insights can be valuable tools to better understand specific aspects or to identify potential risks. They can provide a foundation or guidance for well-informed decisions.



But the art itself — the ability to feel and to achieve a high level harmony with the horse — this art of riding's truth is not revealed in science or through science. The art unfolds in doing, in experience, and in the continual search for the whole, which is far more than the sum of its (scientifically measurable) parts.

YMR

The author

Dr. Yvonne M. Raden is a mathematician who, after an interlude in Vienna, where she pursued studies in musicology, has returned to her beloved homeland of Schleswig-Holstein. There, she devotes herself not only to her passions for mathematics, music, "poeterey," and philosophy, but also to her work as a freelance academic editor with experience spanning nearly all scholarly disciplines — including philosophy, theology, other humanities, psychology, medicine, engineering, economics, the natural and linguistic sciences, among others. In addition, she is a poet and author. Her love is devoted both to her homebred Trakehner mare and to the Academic Art of Riding. As a dedicated student of Bent Branderup, she is firmly grounded in the principles of the Academic Art of Riding, yet she embraces a wide horizon of equestrian thought. Drawing on her experience training horses in the spirit of the old masters, she takes joy in sharing her knowledge as a licensed Bent Branderup® trainer.

Bonus

1. Quotes

- Gotthold Ephraim Lessing: "It is not the truth that any individual possesses — or believes themselves to possess — that determines a person's worth, but rather the sincere effort they have made in pursuit of the truth."
- Voltaire: "Everything you say should be true. But not everything that is true must necessarily be said."
- Friedrich Rückert: "Wise are those // who journey through error to reach the truth. // But those who cling to error — // they are the fools."
- Democritus: "In reality, we know nothing; for truth lies in the depths."

- Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach: "We seek the truth, but we wish to find it only where it pleases us.“

2. Worth knowing

The German noun *Wahrheit* (truth) is an abstract derived from the adjective *wahr* (true), which in turn originates from the Indo-European root noun *wēr-, meaning “t*rust, fidelity, assent or accord“.*

(Source: entry „wahr“ in Kluge. Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache, 24th edition.)

The English noun truth is derived from the Old English *trēowþ*, which in turn stems from *trēowe*, meaning “faithful” or “loyal”. This adjective is related to the Proto-Germanic *treuwaz* and ultimately to the Proto-Indo-European root *deru-* (also rendered *dreu-*), meaning “firm,” “solid”, or “steadfast”. Thus, the concept of “truth” in English, much like in German, is etymologically linked to ideas of trust, faithfulness, and reliability rather than abstract factual correctness alone.

(Source: Oxford English Dictionary, Online Etymology Dictionary.)